

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7476

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE, SY

SUBJECT: A PESSIMISTIC VOICE AS SARKIS' INAUGURATION

APPROACHES

1. SUMMARY: AN NAHAR EDITOR AND PROMINENT LEBANESE INTELLECTUAL MICHEL ABU JAWDEH SAYS PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS, WHOM HE SAW SEP 13, IS NOW PESSIMISTIC ABOUT HIS CHANCES OF EFFECTIVELY GETTING HOLD OF SITUATION IN LEBANON AFTER HE ASSUMES OFFICE SEP 23. SARKIS HOPES US WILL PLAN CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN FINDING MIDDLE EAST SOLUTION, AND IS CONSIDERING SENDING A REPRESENTATIVE TO THE US. ABU JAWDEH HIMSELF IS DEEPLY PESSIMISTIC FOR FUTURE OF BOTH LEBANON AND ENTIRE ARAB WORLD, AS PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION GROWS IN INTENSITY. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF CALLED ON MICHEL ABU JAWDEH, CHIEF EDITOR OF LEADING INDEPENDENT BEIRUT DAILY AN NAHAR ON SEP 14. JAWDEH IS RESPECTED LEADING LEBANESE INTELLECTUAL AND ON CLOSE PERSONAL TERMS WITH MOST LEBANESE LEADERS.

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3. SARKIS PESSIMISTIC. ABU JAWDEH VISITED PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS APPROXIMATELY SEP 6 AND AGAIN ON SEP 13, IN EAST BEIRUT. HE SAID SARKIS HAD BEEN OPTIMISTIC AT TIME OF EARLIER ENCOUNTER AS TO HIS CHANCES OF ASSUMING POWER SEP 23 AND BEGINNING PROCESS OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. HOWEVER, ON SEP 13, (TWO DAYS AFTER FAILURE OF SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN MEETING AT SOFAR) SARKIS WAS DEEPLY PESSIMISTIC. SARKIS BELIEVES TWO KEY FACTORS WHICH HE CANNOT CONTROL, AND ONLY SLIGHTLY INFLUENCE, ARE THE SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS. HE NOW BELIEVES, ABU JAWDEH SAID, THAT PALESTINIANS ARE UNWILLING TO MAKE BASIC COMPROMISES WITH SYRIANS, DESPITE ALL THE CURRENT NEGOTIATING ACTIVITY. SINCE SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN RECONCILIATION IS SINE QUA NON OF A LEBANESE RECONCILIATION PROCESS UNDER HIS OWN LEADERSHIP, HE CANNOT SUCCEED IF THEY DO NOT REACH AGREEMENT. HAWDEH IS HOWEVER COMPLETELY CONFIDENT THAT SARKIS WILL ASSUME OFFICE SEP 23.

4. SARKIS, THE US AND THE MIDDLE EAST EQUATION. ABU JAWDEH SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED WITH SARKIS IDEA OF SENDING A REPRESENTATIVE TO WASHINGTON, OR EVEN OF GOING HIMSELF. SARKIS BELIEVES THAT LEBANESE PROBLEM HAS BECOME PART OF OVERALL MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM, THAT IS, THE QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD, AND THAT LEBANON THEREFORE NEEDS US POLITICAL INITIATIVE IN THE REGION IF FIGHTING IN LEBANON IS TO BE STOPPED PERMANENTLY.

5. A DISMAL FUTURE FOR LEBANON AND THE ARAB WORLD. SPEAKING FOR HIMSELF, ABU JAWDEH SAID HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT ANY AUTHENTICALLY DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT WILL REVIVE IN LEBANON. HE FEELS THAT SARKIS' ONLY OPTIONS ARE TO RELY ON THE SYRIANS, IN WHICH CASE HAFIZ ASSAD WILL BE THE REAL RULER OF LEBANON, OR TO RELY ON THE EXISTING KFOUR FRONT LEADERS AND PURSUE THEIR GENERAL POLICY GOALS. IN EITHER CASE, PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN LEBANON IS DEAD. LEBANESE STATE CANNOT SURVIVE IN FACE OF PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION EXCEPT, POSSIBLY, THROUGH DICTATORIAL MEASURES. PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION IS AFFECTING LEBANON NOW, BUT CONFIDENTIAL

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IT WILL SPREAD TO AFFECT NUMBER OF ARAB STATES IN COMING YEARS, UNLESS A HOME FOR THE PALESTINIANS CAN BE FOUND.

6. PALESTINIAN SOLUTION. FOR ABU JAWDEH, ONLY SOLUTION TO PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IS A PALESTINIAN STATE, ESSENTIALLY ON THE WEST BANK. HOWEVER, HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT PLO MUST NECESSARILY BE PARTNER IN

ESTABLISHING PALESTINIAN STATE. HE BELIEVES THAT ENTIRE PROBLEM OF UNACCEPTABILITY OF PLO TO ISRAEL CAN BE SIDESTEPED BY ESTABLISHING PALESTINIAN STATE ON WEST BANK UNDER AUSPICES OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, WITH US TAKING LEAD.

7. COMMENT: SARKIS' SPIRITS MAY HAVE REVIVED BY LATEST PROSPECT OF HIS PARTICIPATION AS LEBANESE REPRESENTATIVE AT TRIPARTITE SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN-LEBANESE MEETING. ABU JAWDEH'S VIEW THAT THE QUESTION OF THE CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE CAN BE SEPARATED FROM THE QUESTION OF WHO WILL GOVERN IT IS ONE THAT HAS OCCASIONALLY BEEN MENTIONED IN POLITICAL CIRCLES IN BEIRUT.
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